



POLICY FOR THE PUBLIC USE OF MEETING ROOMS

Policy #: 4008

Effective Date: November 1, 2021

I. POLICY STATEMENT

As an expression of its mission to bring information, ideas and people together to build a stronger community, the Sonoma County Library provides meeting space in its Meeting Rooms. Meeting Rooms are primarily used for Library-sponsored events.

When not in use by the Library, other individuals and organizations are welcome to apply for use under the conditions given by this policy. The Library makes these rooms available regardless of opinion or affiliation. By making a meeting room available as a forum, the Library does not sponsor or endorse the view of any group using the room, nor does it provide any supervision.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Free reservation** of Meeting Rooms is available to non-profit groups; public agencies; cultural, educational or civic groups; Sonoma County Library card holders; and Sonoma County residents, provided all of the following criteria are met:
 - a. The meeting is a presentation and exchange of information and opinions of a non-commercial nature to groups of at least five (5).
 - b. No commercial or fundraising activity may take place (including goods for sale, solicitation or promotion of a business or product), no admission charged, and no donations solicited.
 - c. The meeting must be open to the general public regardless of target audience, without payment of dues or other fees, except that closed-session meetings of legislative bodies held in accordance with the Brown Act are also allowed.
- B. **Fee-based rental** of Meeting Rooms is available to commercial entities; other profit-based organizations; groups or individuals not meeting all of the criteria listed for "free reservation" above; and for private social events such as parties, memorial services or celebrations.
- C. **Joint Powers Authority (JPA) member agency events** include free programs for the public, public meetings subject to the Brown Act, internal activities closed to the public

and other meetings or events sponsored and/or coordinated by the Library's JPA partners in their respective communities. These events do not fall under the scope of this policy.

- D. **Library-sponsored events** include free programs provided by the Library to the public; internal Library activities closed to the public; Library Literacy Services sessions; affiliated Friends of the Library or Foundation meetings, fundraisers and sponsored events; Library Commission and Library Advisory Board meetings; and events co-sponsored by any of these organizations. These events are coordinated by the Library and do not fall under the scope of this policy.

III. POLICY

A. Scope

This policy outlines the policy under which outside organizations and individuals may reserve or rent a Meeting Room at the Sonoma County Library. The Library Director or designee may authorize additional restrictions or exceptions that are consistent with this policy and assist in its implementation.

B. Limits on Use

- a. Library-sponsored events have priority over all outside users of the Meeting Room. The Library reserves the right to cancel confirmed reservations to accommodate Library-sponsored events. Library staff will notify scheduled Meeting Room users in the event of cancellation with as much notice as possible, and no less than seven (7) days in advance of the scheduled event, except as noted in subsection d, below.
- b. Use of the Meeting Room is not intended for the permanent regular and continuing meetings of any group or individual.
- c. Free reservation of the Meeting Room (as defined in II.A.) is available to individuals or groups up to twelve times per year, on a rolling calendar. City or County government departments have no annual limit to meetings. Other exceptions may be granted by the Library Director or designee.
- d. There is no limit on the number of fee-based rental of Meeting Rooms (as defined in II.B.).
- e. Use of the Meeting Room may be terminated at any time if the conduct of the group, or any member of the group, is disruptive to Library service or dangerous to the building, Library materials, exhibits, furnishings or individuals in the Library, and/or violates the Library's current [Standards of Behavior policy](#). The Library reserves the right to take any action necessary to ensure a safe and appropriate environment.
- f. If the Library is closed due to an emergency or hazardous condition, such as a mandatory evacuation, or power outage, the Meeting Room will also be closed to outside users. In emergency situations, advance notification of users may not be possible.

- g. Activities taking place within a meeting, including banners, signs and flags, may not extend beyond the Meeting Room into the Library building or outside Library premises.
- h. Items may not be stored in Meeting Rooms prior to or after the meeting.

C. Safety

- a. The posted capacity/occupancy of the room must be observed, and all fire and safety rules must be followed. Access to aisles, walkways and entrances must be kept clear, including keeping electrical cords out of footpaths.
- b. The Library's [Standards of Behavior](#) must be observed by all participants, with the following exceptions:
 - a. **Food and Beverage Service**
 - i. Light refreshments may be served.
 - 1. Use of heating elements, such as hotplates, percolators or chafing dishes with fuel canisters (e.g. Sterno) is prohibited.
 - ii. Alcoholic beverages may be served and/or consumed only with advance written approval of the Library Director and after obtaining any required license or permit from the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC). Intent to serve alcohol must be indicated on your room rental application.
 - b. **Commercial Activity**
 - i. Fee-based rental of Meeting Rooms allows users to conduct commercial activity (i.e. goods for sale) and solicitation of donations, as permitted by law.

D. Set Up and Clean Up

- a. No janitorial service for moving materials or arranging furniture is provided; users should set up and replace tables and chairs.
- b. Materials may be displayed only on areas provided for that purpose, or on easels. At no time may users mar or alter the walls, ceilings, painted surfaces or floors with nails, staples, glue or other substances.
- c. Users are responsible for leaving the room in a clean condition as received. If clean-up is not acceptable, the Library may schedule the necessary cleaning and charge all costs to the responsible party who reserved or rented the Meeting Room.

E. Publicity

- a. Publicity for non-Library-sponsored events in the Meeting Room is the responsibility of the users. The Library will not promote outside activities through its own publicity channels, including social media.

- b. Meetings that are not co-sponsored by the Library must ensure that any promotional material or publicity advertising their meeting shall not claim that the Library is presenting, sponsoring, promoting or endorsing their meeting, and the Library's logo may not be used in any publicity materials. Publicity notices must include the following disclaimer: "This program is neither sponsored by nor affiliated with the Sonoma County Library."

F. Liability and Insurance Coverage

- a. The Sonoma County Library assumes no responsibility for personal property loss.
- b. Users are responsible for damage to the room or Library property in the room.
- c. All persons, groups and organizations shall agree to hold harmless, defend and indemnify the Library, its officers, officials, employees and volunteers from and against any and all claims, demands, actions, losses, damages, expense or cost, or liability of any kind, including death, which might arise from the use of the Library Meeting Rooms.
- d. The Library reserves the right to require any Meeting Room user to provide proof of insurance which shall insure the Library against any liability arising from use of a room.
 - a. If insurance is required by the Library, the individual or group must procure and maintain \$1 million General Liability insurance naming the Sonoma County Library, its officers, officials, employees and volunteers as additional insured and must specify that the Meeting Room user's insurance shall apply on a primary, non-contributory basis to any insurance or self-insurance carried by the Library.
 - b. If insurance is required by the Library, applicants must submit proof of insurance to the Library Director or designee 10 days prior to the scheduled event.

G. Procedure for Application and Reservation Process

- a. The Library Director establishes the list of library Meeting Rooms available for outside use, the hours available for use, and the procedures for use.
- b. A Meeting Room use application must be approved before arrangements for use of the room can be made.
- c. Persons responsible for the application and reservation must be at least 18 years of age.
- d. Applications must be submitted and arrangements must be completed at least ten (10) days in advance of the event and no more than three (3) months in advance.
- e. Full payment for fee-based rentals is required at the time of reservation. If the event is cancelled by the applicant at least thirty (30) days prior to the event, all fees are refunded. If the event is cancelled by the applicant fewer than thirty (30) days prior to the event, all fees paid are forfeited. Refunds will be processed at the Library's administrative headquarters and provided by check sent in US mail.
- f. If the Library must cancel an outside event with advance notice, or an event cannot take place due to an unexpected library closure, all fees will be refunded.

Refunds will be processed at the Library's administrative headquarters and provided by check sent in US mail.

- g. If the Library must cancel an event due to the dangerous or disruptive conduct of the group or any of its attendees, no refund will be offered.
- h. The Library reserves the right to require additional conditions be met prior to finalizing arrangements. These conditions may include, but are not limited to: proof of insurance, security deposit, cleaning deposit, key deposit, limits on materials/items permitted in the Meeting Room, or contracted Security services.

H. Denial of Meeting Room Use

- a. The use of a Meeting Room may be denied for any reason outlined in this policy, including failure to meet the conditions required for free reservation or fee-based rental and failure to follow the Library's [Standards of Behavior](#).
- b. Denials of Meeting Room use may be appealed to the Library Director in writing. The Library Director's decision is final.

I. Fees

[Fees for Meeting Room rentals are set by the Library Commission, and are available in a separate schedule](#). Fees are not charged for groups that meet the definition for a free reservation in II.A. above, nor for JPA member events nor Library-sponsored events. Exact fees due will be calculated by the Library and full payment will be collected at time of reservation.

IV. REVISION HISTORY:

Policy #: 4008

Effective Date: November 1, 2021

Significant Changes:

- Update definition for free reservations and fee-based rentals to include specific criteria.
- Set clear limits for use and time periods for application, cancelation, and refund.
- Provide specific information on safety, standards of behavior, liability, potential insurance requirements and other special conditions.
- Provide guidance regarding publicity.
- Clarify precedence of Library (and Library-sponsored/Library-affiliated) events and JPA member events, including Friends and Foundation activities.
- Describe the Library Director's role in administering this policy.

Approved by: Library Commission